Bad news on the wire

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN WASHINGTON, DC

the Associated Press and United Press spot stories of the day, as a look at the with the national Newhouse chain.

the 1960s and, as the new decade begins, Peking, which the newspaper syndicates question whether the day will not arrive publishers of these newspapers are itself. questioning whether they need both major A new factor in the growing com-terms with the increasing competition

wire services as well.

observers in the publishing industry fear material not now offered by the New that a cause-and-effect cycle has begun York Times News Service. which will ultimately spell the end of an The Chicago Daily News was the first old and proud news operation. The pri- to offer a supplementary report, starting vately operated UPI has been viable as a in 1898. Over the years it gained attennews service in recent years primarily be-tion for its serious, comprehensive covercause many editors consider its reports to age of foreign news. Later, news services be better written and its general operation were formed by the New York Herald more spirited than those of the AP which Tribune, the Chicago Tribune-New York is owned by the newspaper industry. Daily News, and the New York Times Once a decline in reporting sets in, it is and were purchased mainly by metroing to UPI.

Even the AP has been forced to change First the New York Times established its habits by the upstart competition and a viable news syndicate, offering not only The Federal Communications Commission the agency's daily and advance report columns and a diet of foreign stories, but finally decided, at the end of April, that now includes lengthy investigative stories, also spot news coverage from Washington beginning in July newspapers and wire major controversial articles, more columns and all over the country. By 1963, there services would no longer be entitled to of opinion and more in-depth coverage of were 70 subscribers; today there are cheaper transmission charges than other such subjects as science, medicine and the more than 325 in the United States and users of commercial telegraph facilities, arts. To editors coverage of these fields, as major world capitals. The Washington The FCC had been studying the subject well as analytical reporting and columns Post and Los Angeles Times joined forces for six years and only one commissioner, to supplement the spot news coverage of to establish an independent news service Mr Nicholas Johnson, dissented. In vain the wire services, have been the main in 1962, and since then nearly 300 newsthe press argued that loss of its attractions of the newspaper news services, papers around the world have subscribed preferential position would interfere with In practice, however, the big supple to it. Now the Chicago Daily News and the free flow of news. The FCC mental services have competed more and Sun-Times (owned by Marshall Field insisted that the two major wire services, more with AP and UPI on the leading Enterprises) have started a joint service the Associated Press and United Pres

International, had already taken steps—front pages of America's large newspapers Meanwhile, on the debit side, the New a move from many individual telegraph shows: there are fewer and fewer AP and York Herald Tribune went out of business to a single "voice" circuit which UPI credits and more and more to the and shut down its wire service, and the

lines to a single "voice" circuit which can be subdivided—to offset the higher costs. As for the so-called "supplementary" news services, the commission of a larger foothold. Reuters, since was not attracting the attention of mentary" news services, the commission of the dropped its mutual exchange agree-publishers. This left the New York Times ments with AP, has expanded aggressively and the combined Washington Post-Los in the United States. Guardian and Angeles Times services as the two largest to foot the bill.

For the two major news services, the los Angeles Times/Washington Post fourth largest news services in the country. blow comes at a bad time. Besides suffer-News Service and Times of London Officials of the AP state publicly that ing from inflation, like everyone else, they dispatches (and some Agence France-they do not consider the supplementary have been faced during the past decade Presse reports, particularly from Asia) are wires as real competition and, indeed,

have been faced during the past decade Presse reports, particularly from Asia) are wires as real competition and, indeed, with increasing competition. Most of the sent out on the New York Times News under AP bylaws there could be no such leading newspapers began to take one or Service. The Toronto Globe & Mail has competition (in theory) from member more of the supplementary services during made an impact with its dispatches from papers. Privately, some wire service men

when AP's management has to come to

petition has been the announcement of from its own member owners: The usual victim of such considerations the New York Times that it has decided has been United Press International, an to establish a "feature syndicate," under amalgam of the old UP and International the direction of the same man who directs News Service. Several papers such as the the Times news service. The new feature Courier-Journal and the Times, both of package, to be sold to newspapers and Louisville, Kentucky, have dropped UPI magazines, will include articles comin favour of a new mix of news sources, missioned by the Times for its Sunday Moreover, UPI has been cutting back on magazine and its Sunday entertainment staff across the country and some sections, book serialisations and new

feared more newspapers will stop subscrib- politan newspapers. During the 1960s, this pattern was altered radically.